FOUR LETTERS

TO

Mr. J. MAYER,

OF

Stockport,

ON HIS DEFENCE OF THE

Sunday Schools.

BY THOMAS WHITAKER,
Minister of Ringway, Cheshire.

"There is no absurdity more glaring than that of attempting to REFORM mankind by a stated breach of the Fourth Commandment."

Prospectus to the Weekly Register.

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1798.

FOUR LETTERS

TO

Mr. J. MAYER.

LETTER I.

SIR,

WHEN the Rev. Mr. Olerenſhaw publiſhed his Sermon on the Sanctification of the Chriſtian Sabbath, he did not expect that any perſon would undertake to animadvert upon it. He prefixed, however, an advertiſement, ſignifying his averſion to controverſy, and that, ſhould an attempt be made to oppoſe what he had written, he had not the leaſt intention to reply. You are pleaſed to attribute his conduct in this reſpect to cowardice; but, in truth, it aroſe from far different motives. Satisfied with having ſaid what he judged to be right, and knowing that more important matters would daily call for his attention, he thought it prudent not to enter into diſputes on a ſubject which in itſelf was ſufficiently plain. Had I ſeen his manuſcript before it was printed, I ſhould certainly have adviſed him to withhold any ſuch intimation: becauſe a declaration of this kind generally emboldens thoſe to an attack, who otherwiſe would not have the courage to ſtep forward. Thus becauſe he declared himſelf averſe to controverſy, you have inſinuated that he has gone "as far as he durſt," and you argue on

falſe premiſes without fear of contradiction. But, as the doctrine of his ſermon appears to be of the utmoſt importance, and as your attack upon his character, both as a clergyman and as a chriſtian, is unjuſt and illiberal, I hope I ſhall not be deemed an intruder on the public, if I endeavour to make ſome kind of reply to your pamphlet.

Before I proceed to the more immediate object of theſe letters, it may not be unneceſſary to ſtate the ground upon which my friend and his opponent ſtand.—Mr. O. a clergyman of the Church of England, a church in the eſtimation of ſome of your party, nearly the moſt corrupt of any in the world, is urging the neceſſity of a ſtrict and religious obſervance of the Lord's day. And you, a leading perſon among the Methodiſts*, a body of people who have long affected to be the moſt exact and religious of any in the kingdom, ſtand on the oppoſite ſide, pleading for the liberty of employing thoſe ſacred hours in mere ſecular buſineſs. You muſt allow, Sir, that this is a fair ſtatement of the caſe, and I will leave it to the unprejudiced part of mankind to make the proper inference.

The title of your letters, and the mottos you have choſen, call for a ſlight animadverſion. "A Defence of the Sunday Schools, in anſwer to Mr. O's Sermon." Pray, Sir, did Mr. O. ever attack the Sunday ſchools as a general inſtitution? If there are certain abuſes in *ſome ſchools* which he and others think ought to be corrected, he never blamed, in the ſmalleſt degree, the general undertaking. You muſt acknowledge that his own words prove the contrary, p. 16, "Whatever tends to promote the obſervation (of the ſabbath) is not only lawful, but highly laudable. When this is the ſole end of a Sunday ſchool, it

* Some of the Methodiſts ſeem not willing to own Mr. Mayer as one of their party. But I ſhould be glad to know to whom he does belong, if not to thoſe in whoſe ſchools he is a teacher, for whoſe practices he ſo ſtrenuouſly pleads, and for whom he is ſo zealous, that he kindles almoſt into rage, when he ſuſpects (even without any grounds) that Mr. O. is intolerant towards them. Methodiſt preachers have occaſionally, and very juſtly, blamed people for neglecting their families under a pretence of religion; but when Mr. O. preſumes to do the ſame, it excites Mr. M's higheſt indignation.

deſerves the encouragement and calls for the liberal ſupport of all ranks of men." Again, at p. 20, "Let none ſuppoſe that I am ſpeaking againſt theſe ſchools in general. When conducted according to the firſt intention, they are of great uſe and importance." Is this, Sir, the attack which you are combating? Or do the Sunday ſchools need any defence againſt it? Yet it is commonly reported among the Methodiſts, that Mr. O. has publiſhed a ſermon againſt the Sunday ſchools! and from the title of your book, I imagine the idea has originated with you. If ſo, I hope you will do juſtice to his injured character, by acknowledging the falſity of ſuch a report. The title, Sir, is a groſs impoſition upon the public. It ought to have been "A Defence of the Abuſe of Sunday Schools, in anſwer to Mr. O's Sermon on the uſe and abuſe of thoſe Seminaries." Or rather, perhaps, as you are conſtantly employed in teaching (not children, but) grown up people to write, and caſt accounts on the Sunday, your book might have been ſtyled, An apology for your own conduct, which ſtands reproved in a ſermon preached at Mellor. Some ladies have obſerved, that you would be more uſefully employed in teaching young women to *knit* and *ſew* on a Sunday, than in teaching them to write; becauſe that ſpecies of knowledge would "make them more capable of promoting the cauſe of God in the world," eſpecially of becoming better houſewives; and ſo "is directly within the purpoſe of this inſtitution." P. 26. Should you then, at any future period, adopt the method which you recommend to Mr. O. P. 49, Should you "extend your plan a little, and make it a little *more* liberal," you will be under the neceſſity of writing another *Defence of the Sunday Schools.*

Your firſt motto is taken from Hoſea iv. 6. *My people are deſtroyed for lack of knowledge.* Mr. O's objection to *ſome kinds* of Sunday ſchools is, that public worſhip is neglected, and that writing and

arithmetic are taught in them on the Lord's day. Are the people of God then deſtroyed for lack of the knowledge of arithmetic? Is it neceſſary to teach this kind of learning on a Sunday, for fear the people ſhould periſh everlaſtingly for want of knowing it? If not, how does your motto agree with an anſwer to Mr. O's ſermon? Your ſecond motto, from the Spectator, ſeems to intimate that Mr. O. is an enemy to the inſtruction of children and youth in the principles of religion and virtue. But you have not produced any thing from his ſermon to countenance this opinion. And does not his unwearied diligence in his pariſh contradict ſuch a notion? In ſhort, Sir, I look upon the whole of your title-page, as it relates to Mr. O. to be artful, inſidious, and diſingenuous. It has the appearance of a ſly attack upon one, whom you dare not meet in an open and manly way. Sunday ſchools are popular; and to inſinuate that Mr. O. has publiſhed ſomething againſt them, may probably fix an odium upon him, though I wiſh not to impute any bad intentions to you, without the cleareſt and fulleſt evidence. In the preſent caſe, however, appearances are againſt you. In my next, I ſhall examine more particularly the contents of your pamphlet.

I am, &c.

T. W.

LETTER II.

SIR,

YOUR book is either ſo void of method, or the method you have choſen is ſo contrary to my ideas of propriety, that I muſt be content to gather up the threads of your diſcourſe from different parts of it. You are ſo exceſſively angry with Mr. O. that almoſt every page is crouded with hard ſpeeches uttered againſt him. He is—"ignorant—ſuperſtitious—bigotted—dealing out anathemas not only againſt individuals, but againſt whole bodies of men whoſe religious character had been till then unimpeached. He is artful and diſguiſed—an enemy to the Sunday Schools—diſcouraging the ſpreading of evangelical truth—nay exerting himſelf to prevent this—maintaining the principle, that ignorance is the mother of devotion—a bitter ſlanderer—an enemy to the public weal—one who preaches for hire, and if he had not a benefice would not preach."—But I ſtop; for it would be tedious to collect all your flowers of rhetoric varied, diverſified, and intermixed through the greateſt part of ninety-eight pages. The beſt apology I can make for you is—that you are a young man—and that you do not know the object of your cenſure. I am a few years older than you, and have been intimately acquainted with Mr. O. for nearly one half of my life. I know him to be a very different perſon to what you have repreſented him. I know alſo that no man could act uprightly in his ſituation, without incurring the reproach of infidels, of groſs and open ſinners, and of ſome wild and extravagant profeſſors of religion, particularly among the Methodiſts. You have picked up theſe ſlanders, which have been caſt upon him by ſuch men, and

have propagated them through the kingdom by means of your pamphlet.

You profeſs that your motives are good, and I will not aſſert the contrary, though you ſo freely impute bad deſigns to Mr. O. Yet I confeſs there are ſome things in your book which I cannot account for. You perſiſt in repreſenting Mr. O. as an enemy to the Sunday Schools, even in defiance of his own expreſs declarations to the contrary. "Let none ſuppoſe that I am ſpeaking againſt theſe ſchools in general; when conducted according to the firſt intention, they are of great uſe and importance," are his own words. You quote this paſſage, and others of the ſame import, and yet moſt unreaſonably continue the ſame charge againſt him. And what is worſe, you alſo repreſent him as an enemy to the inſtruction of youth in the principles of religion. Whatever your motives may be, Sir, *you know* that the direct contrary to theſe things is true; or elſe you are reviling a man to whoſe repeated and unvaried expreſſions and conduct, for more than twenty years paſt, you are an utter ſtranger. One would imagine from the tenor of your performance, that Mr. O. was not only the moſt careleſs clergyman in the neighbourhood; but that he oppoſed to the utmoſt of his power the religious inſtruction of his people. Whereas in reality, it is his zeal for the *proper* care and inſtruction of young people that has provoked your attack. But probably there is no better way of confuting ſuch charges as theſe, than by ſimply declaring the truth. And though Mr. O.'s modeſty may be hurt with the recital, yet in vindicating an injured character, feelings of this kind muſt give way. My friend has been at Mellor upwards of *ſixteen years*. In all that time he has never failed to collect, during the ſummer months, as many young perſons of all ranks as he poſſibly could, and has catechiſed them for an hour on Sunday evenings in the church. I have ſometimes exchanged duty with him, when the num-

bers have been ſo great, that I have found it difficult to addreſs them in a perſonal and particular manner. Beſides, he has not unfrequently had others at his houſe for private inſtruction. And he has regularly inſtructed the children of the Sunday Schools, ſeparately from all theſe. As to the diffuſion of evangelical knowledge, beſides the uſual ſervices on a Sunday, he has frequently a lecture in the Church on the week days. And very often he has expounded the ſcriptures in private houſes, at different places in the chapelry, that the aged and infirm might have an opportunity of hearing the goſpel. Add to this, his conſtant attention to that ſacred duty of viſiting the ſick. And though his labours have not been ſo ſucceſsful as he could deſire, and might have expected; yet very many of the people are fully convinced of the value of their privileges, and continue firmly attached to him and to the church. They think they can be more edified, by a regular attendance upon the ordinances of God in the Church, and by the inſtructions of their own miniſter, than by joining the ſocieties of the Methodiſts, and conforming to them in ſome things for which they have no ſcriptural authority. Hence the indignation of the more violent and ignorant Methodiſts, who deſpiſe ſuch perſons, as having no religion; becauſe they are not diſpoſed to go over to their party. Much diſpleaſure has been expreſſed againſt ſome who *have joined* the Methodiſt-ſocieties, becauſe they will not altogether leave the Church and ramble after every new preacher, to the entire neglect of their families. The odium is caſt upon Mr. O. and you, Sir, have undertaken to echo theſe ſlanders to the world. .....I would hope that you have been deceived by your informers; becauſe this ſuppoſition would free you in ſome degree from malevolent and perſecuting intentions. After all the ſeverity of your cenſure, he is equally as zealous as you for the eſtabliſhment of Sunday Schools when rightly

conducted; and perhaps the world will be amazed to find that the only difference between you is—that you plead for abſence from public worſhip, and for the teaching of writing and arithmetic on a Sunday—and he diſapproves of ſuch practices. And for this difference of opinion, which every one muſt allow to be in his favour, you pour upon him ſuch floods of abuſe as muſt aſtoniſh every reader. I do not call upon you to bluſh at your proceedings. But I am compelled to ſay, as you have done, that it is happy for Mr. O. that he is not to be judged at your bar. And I will cheerfully refer the whole controverſy to that day when "the righteous man ſhall ſtand with great boldneſs before the face of thoſe that have afflicted him and made no account of his labours."—*Wiſd.* v. 1.

I am, &c.

T. W.

LETTER III.

SIR,

I AM not unacquainted with the controverſy which aroſe ſoon after the Reformation in England, reſpecting the morality of the fourth Commandment. It was a controverſy which originated in the peculiar circumſtances of the times, and thoſe men who, with ſo much zeal, endeavoured to decry the religious obſervance of the Lord's day, certainly did themſelves no credit. I am ſorry to ſee you, Sir, a profeſſed Methodiſt, engaging ſo warmly on the ſame ſide of the queſtion; though it is a little remarkable, that your ideas of the ſabbath are even more lax and more undigeſted than

thoſe of your predeceſſors. They maintained that the Sunday ought to be obſerved, becauſe it was enjoined to be kept holy by the authority of the Church. As far as I can collect your views on the ſame head, they amount to this—It is *expedient* to devote one day in ſeven to the concerns of religion.

You profeſs a warm attachment to the Britiſh government, and if you are *ſincere* in your pretenſions, your profeſſion does you credit, and is a reproach to thoſe religioniſts who are otherwiſe minded. But though you are willing to ſubmit to the government while you live under it; yet I think I diſcover, in various parts of your work, a kind of diſpoſition to turn *Frenchman.* You maintain that it is expedient to ſelect *one day in ſeven* for religious purpoſes. The Frenchman ſays this is too much; but *one day in ten* may be ſet apart as a relaxation from buſineſs, and to be employed—as you pleaſe. Now, Sir, if you lived in France, your own principles would lead you to comply literally with this order. You urge nothing in oppoſition to it, except Apoſtolic cuſtom, and on that topic, any perſon would naturally reaſon after this manner: "Why did the Apoſtles keep one day in ſeven? Doubtleſs becauſe they were Jews, and had been accuſtomed to the obſervance of the Jewiſh Sabbath. Had they lived in modern times, they would moſt probably have complied with the common order." Thus you can ſet aſide, without ſcruple, one of the grand peculiarities of Chriſtianity, and make the commandment of God of none effect, in order to maintain your argument in favour of teaching writing and arithmetic on a Sunday. When you charge Mr. O. with having aſſerted that Sunday Schools brought on the abolition of the Sabbath in France, your charge is ſlanderous and ridiculous. But he has reaſon to apprehend that ſuch principles as yours tend to bring on the abolition of the Sabbath in England. And if you lived in France, you would act a moſt

inconſiſtent part, if you did not enlarge your weeks, and obſerve the tenth day as your day of reſt.

It is a happineſs that this nation in its collective capacity, and ſome of the moſt valuable individuals * who compoſe it, have other ideas of the Sabbath than you ſeem to expreſs. For why is Sabbath-breaking puniſhable as a crime by the laws of the land, but becauſe the legiſlature acknowledges the morality of this precept? The Church of England alſo has adopted this commandment into her liturgy along with the reſt, and has ordered the uſual petition to be recited after the reading of it. *Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep his law.* The preſent Biſhop of London in a late publication adviſes, that in Sunday Schools, even the teaching to read *as a ſcience* ſhould be avoided as much as poſſible on the Lord's day, and that the children ſhould be collected, for the purpoſe, on the Saturday evening, and the day of God reſerved for exerciſes purely religious. I will add alſo, that a very reſpectable Dignitary of the Church complained much, not long ago, of the "modern liberal Sunday Schools" in Derbyſhire, on account of their miſ-ſpending the Sabbath. At a neighbouring Church, where he occaſionally attended, he obſerved that ſcarce a boy or a girl

* It is a curious circumſtance, that Methodiſts and Diſſenters, who are ſo oppoſite to each other in various doctrinal ſentiments, can cordially unite in defending the lawfulneſs of ſpending the holy Sabbath in forming letters and caſting up merchants accounts. What would the old Puritans, or the original Methodiſts have thought of ſuch principles? See the Review of this controverſy in the Evangelical Magazine for May 1798. Should the editors of that publication vouchſafe to review my pamphlet, I know what I have to expect from them. Had my friend and I been Diſſenters or Methodiſts, we ſhould have been treated with candour and eſteem. But we are Clergymen of the Church of England! Here, gentle reader, is the clue which will lead thee into the ſecrets of this buſineſs! Wouldſt thou ſee genuine inconſiſtency? Read the Motto to my pamphlet, which is ſuppoſed to be written by the ſame perſons who reviewed Mr. Mayer's book in the ſaid Magazine. For my part, when delivering the truth of God, I know no man after the fleſh, I neither court the favour of theſe gentlemen nor fear their reſentment, and I really am not prepared to give up the religious obſervation of the Lord's day, in compliment either to infidels or to evangelical reviewers. Perhaps theſe laſt ought to be informed, that there is A SNAKE IN THE GRASS which they have not yet ſeen. See page 21 of this pamphlet. But obſerve now, if I am not termed a bigot for the freedom I have uſed in this note.

was to be ſeen in the congregation. On enquiry, he found that they were learning writing and accounts at a Sunday School, "on a liberal plan." The ſociety in London for the encouragement of Sunday Schools, has too ſtrict ideas of the Sabbath to admit of your "liberal plan." According to your own account, the Mancheſter Schools have not yet proceeded ſo far; and I greatly ſuſpect that the plan is ſeldom admitted, except where there is a ſlight mixture of infidel characters among the managers. Such are men's views of the morality of this commandment, that in our nation you ſtand vaſtly in the minority; and I am perſuaded that the great body of the Methodiſts themſelves will by no means approve of your notions. Though I have frequently heard hints thrown out to their diſadvantage; yet I cannot think that they are ſo greatly fallen, as virtually to give up the obligations to obſerve the Chriſtian Sabbath.

You tell Mr. O. that he ought to bring all his proofs on the ſubject from the New Teſtament. But he really believes that both the Old and New Teſtaments *are given by inſpiration of God*, and that both are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs *. You tell him that by ſtrictly obſerving the Lord's day, he is Phariſaical and returning again to Judaiſm. Pray, Sir, was Adam a Jew, and all the Patriarchal Church of God? They reſted on the ſeventh day, becauſe God had ſanctified it, and ſurely they acted right. A few years ago, an itinerant preacher came into this neighbourhood,

* The poor Waldenſes of the thirteenth century ſpake the language of common ſenſe and of genuine piety on this ſubject. The narrative is given by a moſt valuable hiſtorian in theſe terms. "Thoſe who obſerve the Sabbath of Chriſtians, that is, who will ſanctify the day of the Lord, muſt be careful of four things. 1ſt. To ceaſe from earthly and worldly labours. 2d. To abſtain from ſin. 3d. Not to be ſlothful in regard of good works. 4th. To do thoſe things which are for the good of the ſoul. They ſupport their aſſertion by the caſe of the Sabbath-breaker in the book of Numbers, who was ſtoned to death." Milner's Hiſt. of the Church, vol. iii. p. 508.

who told the people that if they paid any regard to the moral law, they were Pharifees and were returning again to Judaifm. And he archly hinted that many of the Methodifts were of the fame opinion, though they would not own it for prudential reafons. It grieves me to fee you attempting to verify his declarations, which I really judged to be flanderous.

Our Lord certainly cleared the doctrine of the Sabbath from the corrupt gloffes of the Pharifees, and by his example and obfervations fhews how we are to underftand that general expreffion in the fourth Commandment, "In it thou fhalt do no manner of work." He evidently allowed that works of neceffity and of charity were not forbidden on that day, and I fuppofe were never intended to be prohibited on the Jewifh Sabbath. And yet thefe works muft have fome bounds, fome fixed limits, more than what every man is apt to fix in his own cafe, otherwife there would be no propriety in fanctifying the day. If tradefmen continue their factories at work, or employ a number of fervants in fecular bufinefs on the Sunday, they ufually urge the plea of neceffity. Some of them will lament with much apparent feeling, that thefe things are very difagreeable to themfelves, but they are not to be avoided. And yet the neceffity is no more than this, that they have a large order for goods, which they cannot execute without fuch an expedient. And what will fuch wretched pleas avail before that God who is no refpecter of perfons! With regard to Charity, the farmers in Chefhire have a profane cuftom of getting in their hay and corn on a Sunday: and when any one attempts to do this, all his wicked neighbours will flock in to help him. And if reproved for the practice, *he* pleads the *neceffity* of his cafe, and *they* declare that their part is purely a work of *charity*, as they are, according to your elegant phrafe, "*gratis workers*," and receive nothing for their labour. I confider your teaching writing and ac-

counts on a Sunday juſt in the ſame light, and when you plead for the lawfulneſs of it, becauſe you do it *gratis*, you might juſt as well plead for the lawfulneſs of working at a Cotton Factory *gratis*. What is improper employment for thoſe ſolemn hours, continues to be ſo whether it is done *for* a reward or *without* a reward. Every thing you ſay to juſtify your practice from that conſideration, appears to me abſurd, and the confuſion of your ideas ariſes from wrong apprehenſions of the law of the Sabbath. While you ground your obligations to keep it, only on expediency, many ſecular employments will be found to be expedient, which the generality of Chriſtians judge to be abſolutely unlawful. You would teach any thing on a Sunday which tends to "expand the minds of youth." p. 26. Now, Sir, the teaching of *Ovid*, and *Virgil*, and *Horace*, and *Homer*, has this tendency. The Problems of *Euclid*, and abſtruſe *Algebraic* Equations put a man in poſſeſſion of his powers, and greatly open the mind. But is it proper to employ the Sunday in teaching theſe branches of literature? Several trades and mechanical arts "tend to expand the mind;" muſt they alſo be taught on a Sunday? What can "expand the minds of youth" more than a knowledge of natural philoſophy? Even when founded on the falſe principles of the modern French ſchools, it ſtill has this effect; and the *Theophilanthropiſts* of *Paris* will tell you that it leads mankind "to adore their Creator." I am afraid, Sir, after all, you will turn Frenchman. I am ſure your principles lead you that way.

You ſay the ſcriptures cannot be underſtood without the knowledge of Arithmetic, and I will add of more vulgar arts. Who can underſtand the conſtruction and workmanſhip of Solomon's temple, without being a ſtone maſon? Who can underſtand the workmanſhip of Noah's ark, without being a carpenter? or the work of the tabernacle, without a knowledge of thoſe branches of

buſineſs which peculiarly relate to its conſtruction? But is it therefore lawful to teach theſe different trades on a Sunday, in order that youth may underſtand the ſcriptures? And yet the addition and ſubtraction of *pounds*, *ſhillings*, and *pence*, have far leſs reference to ſcriptural knowledge than theſe trades.

Your ideas of public worſhip are founded on your miſtaken views of the Sabbath. You would have young people frequent the houſe of God—*when it is convenient*. And you actually maintain that they are more likely to be converted by attending a Sunday School, during the hours of worſhip, than by attending God's own appointed means of grace. Is not this to make yourſelf wiſer than God? Why did not our Lord's commiſſion to his apoſtles run in theſe terms, Go ye into all the world and erect Sunday Schools for every creature? Mr. O.'s view of the Sabbath leads him to enforce both public and private inſtruction. You confine it chiefly to private, and part of that is inſtruction in the rules of Arithmetic, or in the addition of *pounds*, *ſhillings*, and *pence*. You ſay they cannot regularly attend public worſhip, becauſe it would be inconſiſtent with their other duties; that is, they cannot worſhip God in his houſe, becauſe they have to learn writing and arithmetic *. You yourſelf ſeem aware of the falſe reaſoning you have held on the ſubject. You teach arithmetic only "to a privileged few." p. 36. And why only to a few? If it is lawful, if it is neceſſary for a few, it is equally ſo for all who are capable of it. How then can you withhold from the reſt a neceſſary branch of knowledge? Is it not needful that the others ſhould underſtand the ſcriptures? You will not ſay that theſe few, by

* The beſt conducted Sunday Schools in the kingdom are thoſe of Chedder and the neighbouring villages near the Mendip Hills, in Somerſetſhire, under the immediate inſpection of Mrs. Hannah More and her amiable ſiſters. The young people are taught reading and the principles of religion; they are taken twice to the church every Sunday, and have a ſermon and prayers read to them in the evening See a ſhort and intereſting account of theſe Schools in the Gentleman's Magazine for April 1798, p. 292.

their good behaviour in other reſpects, are privileged to break the Sabbath. And in ſhort, I know not why you diſtribute your inſtructions in ſo partial a manner. But it would be endleſs to purſue theſe thoughts. I will devote one letter more to your miſ-ſtatement of facts, and then conclude my correſpondence.

I am, &c.

T. W.

LETTER IV.

SIR,

MR. O. is no enemy to the Sunday Schools, he is no enemy to the diffuſion of religious knowledge. His own earneſt exertions prove the fact, the public is convinced of it, and I am perſuaded will ſee the falſity of your charges againſt him. You ſay "facts are ſtubborn things," and here they are directly againſt you. Before you attempted to convey information to the public, even of an indifferent nature, and reſpecting particular places, you ought to have been ſure that you were poſitively in the right; becauſe a palpable error in a matter of fact weakens the credibility of your whole performance.

You cenſure Mr. O. for ſaying ſo little to excite the generoſity of his audience. It is, however, a truth, that his diſcourſe was followed by a collection nearly twice ſufficient for the expences of the year. Indeed it muſt be allowed that much rhetoric, if not ſophiſtry, is neceſſary to perſuade a congregation that it is charity to beſtow their money for the inſtruction of grown young perſons, and the children of the rich in forming letters, and reckoning

up, *pounds*, *ſhillings*, and *pence*, and that on the Lord's day.

Your friends, the editors of the Evangelical Magazine have ſaid, that your work is "replete with information;" but if the information is erroneous, the Reviewer ought to have known, that your book is replete with error, and his pompous expreſſion does no credit to his underſtanding. I will quote one ſingle paſſage from page 80. "Amongſt the Schools upon this plan (of teaching writing and accounts) is one taught at Thornſet, a village in Mr. O.'s chapelry. Mr. O.'s church ſituated at Mellor, about ſix miles from Stockport, is very ſmall, and his chapelry very large, extending ſeveral miles into Derbyſhire. It contains two places of worſhip, Mellor Church and a Methodiſt Chapel at New Mills, both of which cannot contain more than *two-tenths* of the inhabitants." One would have ſuppoſed that in a paſſage like this, you would have taken pains in your enquiries, and have laboured to be accurate. But, Sir, I can aſſure you that the "village" of Thornſet *is not* in Mr. O.'s chapelry. I aſſure you further, that Mellor Church *cannot* with any truth be termed "*very ſmall.*" I have repeatedly officiated there, when I have judged the congregation to conſiſt of about *a thouſand* people, and all have been decently accommodated. I ſuppoſe that by occupying every part, it might contain *twelve hundred*. Language has no meaning if this can be called "very ſmall" for a country church. From your account one would be ready to conclude that the chapelry of Mellor muſt extend ſeven or eight miles into Derbyſhire, when in reality it extends only about three. You ſtate only *two* places of worſhip in the chapelry, which is alſo *directly falſe*.

It is curious to obſerve the accounts of different Sectariſts reſpecting the ſame matter of fact. Dr. Aikin, who is a Diſſenter, includes this chapelry in his Deſcription of the Country *twenty* miles

round Manchester. He mentions a numerous body of Dissenters here; but speaks of the Church in terms the most diminishing and contemptible. One would suppose from him that almost the whole country are Dissenters. Then comes Mr. Mayer, a Methodist; and he totally overlooks this numerous body of Dissenters, and only mentions two places of worship, Mellor Church, which *is very small*, and a Methodist Chapel. The fact is, there is a Dissenting Chapel at Marple Bridge, within the district of Mellor, the congregation of which is respectable, though not very numerous. The Church is as I have represented it, and on a Sunday afternoon it is generally very well filled. You say, the chapelry "contains many thousands of people in a heathenish state." p. 81. This is no more accurate than the rest. It contains about *six hundred* families, or perhaps near three thousand persons, including infants. Whether *two-tenths* * of these can worship at the same time in all the three Chapels, may serve as a question in arithmetic for your "privileged few" to resolve on a Sunday afternoon. Nor is it true, that the inhabitants are in a heathenish state. If by this term you mean the want of a knowledge of the way of Salvation by Christ, or of a general approbation of the gospel, your assertion is *a direct untruth.* † They have so many means of knowledge, both public and private, that it is impossible their minds should be so very heathenish. And that they are, at least, no worse in their moral conduct than the people of other places, is obvious to every unprejudiced person. I will add also, that though Mr. O. has the same cause for lamentation upon the view of his parish that most other ministers

* Instead of TWO-TENTHS, I should have said ONE-FIFTH; but my mind has not been "expanded" in a Sunday School.

† For the sake of those who seem to take offence at the plain expression A DIRECT UNTRUTH, I might have used the smoother word ERRONEOUS. But what epithet can be devised severe enough against those who designedly give false representations, attempt to injure an innocent character, and teach, by example and precept, to break the fourth Commandment?

have; yet it is certain that there are many truly pious people in it, of the three denominations; and that the people in general are better informed on religious ſubjects, than an equal number taken promiſcuouſly from any part of the country for many miles round. Your account, Sir, is mere ſlander. I wiſh I could attribute it to wrong information, or to any other cauſe that would free you from malicious intentions. Before you printed ſuch a book, you ought to have been more careful in getting information. Your liſt of Sunday Schools round the neighbourhood of Stockport, is extremely incorrect. Within the compaſs of my own knowledge are ſeveral numerous Schools, where you have put a blank. But the managers have too much conſcience to adopt your "liberal plan"!!!

Under the head of a miſ-ſtatement of facts, I am neceſſitated to mention your frequently repeated intimation, that all the managers of Sunday Schools have principally in view the Salvation of the children's ſouls. I will not call in queſtion the aſſertion as far as it reſpects the Methodiſts' Sunday Schools in Stockport. Were I to entertain a doubt on the ſubject, I know what a heretic I ſhould be accounted. And yet there is in my poſſeſſion an Extract from a Memoir book, with an addreſs to the Scholars, which has been attributed to you by general report. This addreſs might have come from the pen of a Pagan, a Muſſulman, or a Jew. The eſſential doctrines of Chriſtianity are ſtudiouſly concealed. The young people are neither exhorted to read the Bible, nor to attend upon public worſhip. Is it poſſible, that the ſouls of mankind ſhould be ſaved without the Goſpel? Admitting, however, the dying teſtimony of theſe young perſons as a proof of their happy ſtate; yet ſurely they might have died equally happy, if they had never learned writing and arithmetic on a Sunday. Nor do their happy deaths render the practice more lawful. Was the

principal design of the Thornset School to save the souls of the children? From the printed report of it, dated Jan. 1, 1797, one would not imagine that children have any souls, or that there is either a God or a future state. But it was likely to be so, when a man was at the head of the teachers, who at the time avowedly rejected the Divine Authority of the Bible. Do not term this a slanderous assertion. I can bring, if necessary, sufficient authority for what I affirm. The Scholars at this School were dismissed early on a Sunday afternoon, and their rude behaviour and mischievous conduct in returning home, were the common complaint of the neighbourhood. Many of them were young men and young women, and the children of those who could well afford to get them instructed on the week days; writing and arithmetic were constantly taught; and public worship was very little regarded. These, Sir, are the efforts of your "humane people,"—must I say, to save the souls of young persons? while in their printed report they themselves give no hint of any advantages to be derived from their School, except such as relate to the present world. Perhaps the person before alluded to, is your correspondent, whose letter you have printed, because it so plentifully slanders and abuses Mr. O. You are very unwilling to be accounted a "great sinner;" and yet I assure you, that the slanderous reproaches you have cast upon him, make you a much greater sinner in the sight of God, than even your teaching young women to write on a Sunday. I wish you sincerely to repent of your sins, whether "great" or small, and to seek mercy at the hand of God in the way of his own appointment.

The number and magnitude of your sins it is not easy to calculate. To every sin is attached the guilt attending its immediate commission and future consequences. By your example and practice thousands may be led into an awful habit of *Sabbath-breaking;* it being next to impossible that

ſuch pupils as yours, ſhould ever conſider that as a crime in a *Counting-houſe* which they have been taught to eſteem and practiſe as a duty and privilege in a ſchool: and upon this ground you may be one of the greateſt Sabbath-breakers that ever exiſted.

I have not criticiſed your pamphlet as a literary performance. And yet when a pert young man takes upon him to charge a clergyman, of twice his years, with ignorance of Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, when he forms a kind of Logical Dilemmas, and challenges the ſaid clergyman to reſolve them, and on all occaſions ſets out himſelf as a man of ſuperior knowledge, his work is certainly a proper ſubject of criticiſm. If you, Sir, ſhould ever gain a *tenth* part of the knowledge of Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory which Mr. O. poſſeſſes, you would then be *ten* times more modeſt than you are at the preſent. As to your famous puzzle at p. 29, if a ſchool-boy, who has read any treatiſe of logic ſhould find himſelf unable to detect the fallacy of your reaſoning, I really think he "muſt have a moſt uncommon ſcull *." Were I inclined to ſyllogiſe a little myſelf, I could preſent you with a curious concluſion or two, fairly drawn from a book, to the author of which you are certainly very partial. But I am not diſpoſed to puſh this matter, and would not willingly quarrel with you on any topic where the honour of God is not immediately concerned. I think it neceſſary, however, to conclude with aſſuring you, that I have by no means exhauſted my ſubject, and that ſhould you proceed with the controverſy, I ſhall undoubtedly write again, if the Lord permit.

And now, Sir, I cannot but perſuade myſelf that you have a deſire to benefit the riſing generation; and that a review of your conduct to which you have been prompted, and of the principles

* Cowper.

which you have haſtily embraced, will lead you to bewail your guilt before God. And though you cannot atone for your temerity, nor follow your Pamphlet into every corner where it has vomited out ſlander, and taught to profane the Sabbath, you will, I truſt and pray, return to your firſt principles, keep holy the Sabbath, and bring all under your authority, not to engage in Writing, Arithmetic, Hiring out books, or Book-keeping on God's Holy Day; but to "worſhip the Lord in the beauty of holineſs," in his own appointed way; and ſo not appear wiſer than God, by ſetting up a method of your own in oppoſition to his.

I am, &c.

THOMAS WHITAKER.

RINGWAY,
July 2, 1798.